

## **FFY 2011 State Plan Update - Attachment 4.11 (e) (2) – Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities**

### **(A) Provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals and priorities were achieved.**

Through **Goal 1**, DVR assisted 2,404 individuals with disabilities to achieve gainful employment in federal fiscal year 2009. This was an increase in rehabilitation outcomes of 47 (or 2%) over the previous year. Of these successful closures, 220 were in supported employment. In 2009, DVR developed 5,665 new individual plans for employment which was a 12% increase from FFY 2008. As a result, DVR increased the number of open cases being served in plan status from 5,416 at the start of FFY 2009 to 6,756 at the end of the year.

In February 2008, DVR released the remaining customers that were waiting for services and has provided services to all eligible individuals since that time. For FFY 2009, DVR accepted 12,013 applications representing a 24% increase from FFY 2008. For FFY 2009, DVR determined 10,399 individuals eligible for VR services, representing a 32% increase from FFY 2008.

Through maximizing employee strengths, increasing collaboration with partners, increasing the use of comparable services and benefits and more efficient use of contracted services, DVR has substantially reduced the average cost per case. Improved management of financial resources enabled DVR to allot more funds to purchased services. As a result, DVR was able to serve substantially more eligible individuals in 2009. DVR will continue to build its overall caseload, particularly the number of people being served in an IPE until we achieve alignment between caseload capacity and resources.

DVR established the following two priorities to achieve Goal 1:

- Priority 1: Increase DVR's ability to assist customers achieve higher wage jobs with benefits.

Result: In 2008, the average wage earned by rehabilitated customers was \$11.28 per hour. In 2009, the average wage earned by rehabilitated customers was \$11.69 per hour.

- Priority 2: Enhance and improve the statewide consistency of timely, individualized services to customers who have a broad range of needs and capabilities.

Result: There was a large backlog of cases waiting for plan development after coming out of order of selection in FFY 2008. Days from application to plan in 2008 was 158, in 2009 this number was decreased to 123 days. Days from application to rehabilitation in 2008 was 372, in 2009 this number decreased to 251 days. In FFY 2009, the number of plans exceeding DVR's 120 day guideline for plan development was reduced from over 2,000 to less than 800. In addition, a new case management

tracking tool was implemented in 2009 to assure consistent and timely service delivery.

Under **Goal 2**, Washington DVR accomplished a number of strategies designed to enhance the organizational infrastructure and skills of its staff in providing high quality VR services. DVR continues to invest significant training efforts to prepare counseling staff to use Motivational Interviewing and strengths-based approaches with customers. This counseling approach has empowered DVR staff to better identify how to assist individuals to move through the rehabilitation process in a timelier manner. Additionally, several staff training modules have been retooled including: Rehabilitation Technician Academy, Advanced Best Practices and Rehabilitation Law Review.

A DVR team of internal job developers was created to enhance individualized job development and placement. DVR has provided events for Area employees and individual field service awards to motivate and recognize the provision of high quality VR services.

An employee survey has been utilized to identify areas of strengths and areas that need improvement to enhance staff support and the provision of quality services.

DVR has created a Senior Rehabilitation Team, with representatives from all levels of the division's staff to provide input and feedback on policy development, organizational efficiencies and changes within the Division.

DVR's workshops for clients related to vocational exploration, dependable strengths and employment success (WorkStrides) continued to expand to more DVR offices throughout 2009. These workshops provide individuals with more in-depth information about their strengths, interests, and capacities, enabling them to make better decisions about a suitable vocational goal and contributing to a higher rehabilitation rate.

DVR continues to utilize an electronic case review tool for VR Supervisors and includes the requirement for Supervisors to review two cases per counselor per month. The results of these reviews are rolled up to the Area and Statewide level to monitor trends and identify training needs. DVR also continues to perform a statewide case review process coordinated by State Office and conducted by a team of field and state office staff. This process further enhances the ability of the agency to review and monitor compliance with federal regulations, trends in case services, and areas in which training or other action is needed. The reviews are indicating substantial improvement in quality and consistency of case service practices throughout the Division.

To improve performance reporting and accountability, DVR continues to use the GMAP (Government Management Accountability Program) and Dashboard reports. The Dashboard reports provide a real-time snapshot of performance on four key performance indicators reported statewide, by area, unit and office that is easily accessible and available to all staff on our intranet web site. Additionally, staff use the technology available through iDVR SharePoint (an intranet application) to share information, communicate and collaborate about best practices, training and other related job activities.

To accomplish **Goal 3**, Washington DVR has taken numerous steps to build and strengthen partnerships that maximize resources and enable DVR to serve more people.

DVR has expanded networking among community partners by introducing an event called "Say Hey" in several communities. Say Hey brings together professionals in the disability and employment field, job seekers, and other interested individuals once a quarter to informally share information and resources related to employment and to help people get connected. The event started in Olympia in 2008 and has spread to Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, Vancouver, Kitsap and Snohomish Counties. DVR has begun soliciting other organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce and Business Leadership Networks, to co-sponsor and pay for Say Hey events.

DVR continues to assist counseling staff to better communicate the role of the agency to customers, partners, employers, and others. A DVR Guide to Services, along with informational DVDs have been posted on DVR's webpage as well as YouTube.

DVR continues to reach out to several agencies with populations who have not been served or have been underserved for the past several years. DVR has strengthened its collaboration with various DSHS programs. Efforts continue at the regional level to establish streamlined referral procedures and to conduct cross-training.

DVR continues efforts to build partnerships with the DSHS Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR), a state agency that contracts with regional entities for the delivery of community mental health services and directly operates two state psychiatric hospitals.

- DVR and DBHR staff continue to work together to jointly conduct cross-system training throughout the state to emphasize key elements of both service delivery systems and to support better coordination of the employment needs of mental health consumers.
- DVR continues to play a key role in the "Willing Partners" employment project created by DBHR using a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant. Participation in the project has expanded from 3 to 5 Regional Support Networks committed to improving employment services to mental health consumers.
- DVR and DBHR continue a mutual collaboration to explore ways that mental health agencies can effectively become Employment Networks and build a revenue stream from the Ticket to Work Program that will fund extended services for mental health consumers who require a supported employment model.
- Across the state, liaison DVR counselors continue to work itinerantly from several Mental Health agencies at least one day per week to facilitate access to VR services for mental health consumers.

DVR has begun collaborative efforts with the Gates Foundation and Building Changes organization with a primary focus on better serving individuals with disabilities who face homelessness and poverty. These two non-profit organizations are working in partnership to implement several pilot projects in Washington State to assist homeless families in obtaining permanent housing and employment. DVR has been invited to join this partnership to assist in serving eligible individuals with disabilities who are members of these families.

**(B) Identify the strategies that contributed.**

**Goal 1:**

- Encouraging staff to achieve counselor expectations for IPEs and rehabilitations
- Expanding WorkStrides
- Strengthening partnerships and use of comparable services and benefits
- Increasing staff skills and recognizing accomplishments
- Developing and using enhanced performance tracking tools and reports

**Goal 2:**

- Implementation of division-wide hiring plans to improve and expedite the hiring process  
Continued to redesign the basic training modules to increase quality and efficiency of rehabilitation practices. Quarterly meetings with the Senior Rehabilitation Team for communication and input from employees representing all positions and geographic areas around program priorities and changes, and a Director's Advisory Committee to hear staff concerns and issues
- Implemented an equipment replacement plan to assure staff have safe, reliable tools and equipment to perform their work
- Finalized major enhancements to the electronic case management tool, particularly the IPE
- Chief of Field Services toured field offices regularly to listen to concerns and answer questions
- Continued to utilize a statewide case review process
- Utilized Government Management, Accountability and Performance (GMAP) reports and templates at the state and area level to identify and understand concerns and design strategies to address them
- Posted real-time performance dashboards on DVR's intranet for easy access by all DVR staff

**Goal 3:**

- Conducted public meetings to listen to partners and elicit feedback for DVR planning and priorities
- Expanded Say Hey – informal networking and information sharing events in local communities
- Continued to refocus partnerships with DDD and Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) to create employment opportunities that result in higher wage jobs for individuals with disabilities (Project SEARCH and state government)
- Established agreements with key partners and maintained strong relations with existing partners

**(C) Factors that impeded achievement of the goals.****Goal 1:**

During most of FFY 2009, Washington DVR was unable to fill vacancies for extended periods nor establish any additional positions. Due to worsening statewide economic issues, the Governor imposed a statewide general government hiring freeze was initiated in February 2009 which prevented DVR from filling any vacant positions until after June 30, 2009.

Simultaneously, because of a state budget crisis between July 1, 2009 and September 30, 2009 DVR was allocated fewer FTEs causing a shortage of counseling staff to manage vacant caseloads. During this same time, approximately 10 direct service delivery staff went on extended medical leave or were terminated as the result of disciplinary actions and DVR was not able to backfill those vacancies because of the statewide hiring freeze and related FTE limitations.

Because of the recession and the state's high unemployment rate which was nearly 10%, it became very hard to find job openings with mid to high wages.

## **Goal 2:**

DVR ended FFY 2008 in a statewide hiring freeze that remained in effect through the first 6-months of FFY 2009; this left numerous offices short staffed for an extended period. State travel restrictions and the elimination of scheduled employee raises also continued to be in effect throughout most of FFY2009.

Continuing to maintain high morale in an environment where employees are asked to do more and more without needed staff support or deserved financial compensation continues to be difficult. Employees continued to become understandably anxious and concerned as economic conditions deteriorated, discussion of layoffs and downsizing became more and more prevalent.

## **Goal 3:**

DVR was able to accomplish everything identified in Goal 3 without any major difficulty. Because of the recession and high unemployment rate DVR experienced an increase in new and not always appropriate referrals. Because of strong local partnerships we were able to have dialogue and get more appropriate referrals.

### **(D) Assess the performance of the state on the standards and indicators.**

**Standard and Indicator 1.1: The number of individuals achieving employment outcomes during the current performance period compared to the previous performance period.**

For FFY 2009, DVR achieved 2,404 employment outcomes, 47 outcomes over the number needed to pass this standard.

**Standard and Indicator 1.2: The percentage of individuals receiving services under an individualized plan for employment who achieve employment outcomes.**

DVR achieved a rehabilitation rate of 55.37% in FFY 2009. That was slightly below the standard of 55.8% required to meet this standard.

**Standard and Indicator 1.3: Competitive employment outcomes as a percentage of all employment outcomes.**

DVR achieved this standard with 98.62% of employment outcomes as competitive employment outcomes.

**Standard and Indicator 1.4: Competitive employment outcomes for individuals with Significant Disabilities as a percentage of all employment outcomes.**

99.39% of DVR's competitive employment outcomes were individuals with Significant Disabilities.

**Standard and Indicator 1.5: The ratio of the average VR Hourly Wage to the Average State Hourly Wage.**

DVR achieved a wage ratio of 0.518 in FFY 2009 that was slightly below the standard of 0.52. As of March 2010 DVR is achieving a wage ratio of 0.533.

**Standard and Indicator 1.6: The percent of individuals achieving Competitive Employment Outcomes who report their own income as Primary Source of Support at Closure as compared to application.**

DVR passed the federal standard by achieving 60.6%.

**Standard and Indicator 2.1: Access to services for Minorities as measured by the ratio of the Minority Service Rate to the Non-Minority Service Rate.**

DVR achieved a service ratio of 0.93 which was well above the federal standard of 0.80.

**(E) Provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.**

During FFY 2009 DVR reserved funds for the following innovation and expansion activities, including funding of the SRC and SILC.

1. An initiative that focuses on state government as a model employer of individuals with disabilities was postponed in FFY 2008 but revitalized in FFY 2009. The Department of Social and Health Services volunteered to be the first state agency in Washington to become a model employer and has charged DVR to work with the DSHS Human Resource Division to implement a department-wide initiative to increase the number of individuals with disabilities employed at all levels within the department. While a statewide general government hiring freeze through June 2011 makes this initiative a challenging endeavor, there will be a number of DSHS positions exempted from the freeze that will be targeted for recruitment of DVR customers and other individuals with disabilities.
2. Five pilot projects were concluded to replicate the Project Search supported employment model at participating hospitals in Seattle, Vancouver, Spokane, Yakima, and Port Angeles. DVR contracted with a noted supported employment consulting firm to provide technical assistance at each Project Search site. The results of the project were less than anticipated; it turned out to be impossible to develop the targeted number of jobs because of general lay-offs and deep labor cuts in the participating hospitals.
3. DVR forged a partnership with the Washington Community Mental Health Council to continue developing a model for Mental Health Agencies to become Employment Networks and use Ticket to Work revenues as a funding source for supported employment extended services. This model will incorporate peer support as an key element that prepares and sustains customers with mental health disabilities in successful employment.

4. The work of the Washington State Business Leadership Network (BLN) and its partnership with DVR was enhanced with continued funding for the BLN Executive Director position. DVR has designated local staff that participates monthly in Business Leadership Network activities.
5. Collaboration continued with the Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE) and O'Neill & Associates to build capacity for increasing the skills of employment service providers. This has been an effective collaboration. During this State Plan period, DVR has provided funding support for the replication of the Highline Community College Employment Specialists Certificate program in Vancouver and Spokane. DVR has provided funding for a series of six workshops (one in each of the DSHS Regions) to build the skills of supported employment services staff and will continue funding through March 2010 with another series of workshops focused on partnerships with DVR and building job development and job placement skills.

**(F) Identify supported employment goals**

DVR will continue to serve approximately 275 individuals in IPEs with a supported employment goal and to achieve approximately 200 supported employment outcomes per year.